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FRANCIS THOMPSON

Francis Thompson was born at Ashton in Lancashire in 1859. He was the son of a doctor, and was himself intended for the medical profession, taking the medical course at Owens College, Manchester. He had no interest in that profession, but had, from the first, an ardent interest in religion, particularly as embodied in the Roman Church. Till 1888, when he first made himself known to the public by a poem in "Merry England," he lived in acute poverty, and laid the foundation of that ill-health which was to dog him always and thereby to limit his output. The rest of his life is the story of the exquisite friendship for the shattered poet of Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Meynell, and in the quiet they sought to provide for him of the production of his all too limited work in three volumes published in 1893, 1895, 1897. He struggled for years with tuberculosis, and died in 1907, owing nothing to life, but great love and gratitude to the Meynells—a gratitude shared by English literature.

Francis Thompson, like Christopher Smart and William Blake, may be described, in the language of the Charter Party, as "an Act of God." Considering the inexhaustible fertility of English poetry, we have grown used to each century presenting us with a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Dryden, or a Wordsworth. But even our settled complacencies are disturbed by the impact of these fireballs, inexplicably detaching themselves from some starry neighbourhood and for a brief space astounding the earth with almost intolerable flames.

Francis Thompson, like the others, never made the least concession to things terrene. He remained, all his poetic life, in direct communion with his flaming origins, and he took no trouble to mitigate their brightness. The result was, inevitably, sometimes to puzzle, often to shock the lethargic intelligence of earth. But whether puzzled or startled, no one could doubt that here were to be overheard the mutterings of the stars.

No doubt when he was tired Thompson sometimes imitated himself, and attempted to recapture with high-sounding words that rapture which normally needed such words, so that it might have room to display itself. But at his best his verse was the natural expression of something which, transcending expression, called for space, lest poet and poem should be burned alive. Perhaps the truth is that they were burned alive—that they are burning now, and with living fire.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

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For permission to publish these selections, the publishers express their thanks to the poet's literary executor, Mr. Wilfrid Meynell.

Dream-Tryst

THE breaths of kissing night and day
Were mingled in the eastern Heaven;
Throbbing with unheard melody
Shook Lyra all its star-chord seven;
When dusk shrunk cold, and light trod shy,
And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey,
And souls went palely up the sky,
And mine to Lucidé.

There was no change in her sweet eyes
Since last I saw those sweet eyes shine;
There was no change in her deep heart
Since last that deep heart knocked at mine.
Her eyes were clear, her eyes were Hope's,
Wherein did ever come and go
The sparkle of the fountain-drops
From her sweet soul below.

The chambers in the house of dreams
Are fed with so divine an air,
That Time's hoar wings grow young therein,
And they who walk there are most fair.
I joyed for me, I joyed for her,
Who with the past meet girt about :
Where our last kiss still warms the air,
Nor can her eyes go out.

The Kingdom of God

"In no Strange Land."

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee !

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

From *A Judgment in Heaven*

VIRTUE may unlock hell, or even
A sin turn in the wards of Heaven—
(As ethics of the text-book go)—
So little men their own deeds know,
Or through the intricate *mêlée*
Guess whitherward draws the battle-sway;
So little, if they know the deed,
Discern what therefrom shall succeed.

To wisest moralists 'tis but given
To work rough border-law of Heaven,
Within this narrow life of ours,
These marches 'twixt delimitless Powers.
Is it, if Heaven the future showed,
Is it the all severest mode
To see ourselves with the eyes of God?
God rather grant, at His assize,
He see us not with our own eyes!

Heaven, which man's generations draws,
Nor deviates into replicas,
Must of as deep diversity
In judgment as creation be.
There is no expeditious road
To pack and label men for God,
And save them by the barrel-load.
Some may, perchance, with strange surprise,
Have blundered into Paradise.
In vasty dusk of life abroad,
They fondly thought to err from God,
Nor knew the circle that they trod;
And, wandering all the night about,
Found them at morn where they set out.
Death dawned; Heaven lay in prospect wide:—
Lo! they were standing by His side!

To a Poet Breaking Silence

TOO wearily had we and song
Been left to look and left to long,
Yea, song and we to long and look,
Since thine acquainted feet forsook

* Alice Meynell.

The mountain where the Muses hymn
For Sinai and the Seraphim.
Now in both the mountains' shine
Dress thy countenance, twice divine!
From Moses and the Muses draw
The tables of thy double Law!
His rod-born fount and Castaly
Let the one rock bring forth for thee,
Renewing so from either spring
The songs which both thy countries sing :
Or we shall fear lest, heavened thus long,
Thou shouldst forget thy native song,
And mar thy mortal melodies
With broken stammer of the skies.

Ah! let the sweet birds of the Lord
With earth's waters make accord;
Teach how the crucifix may be
Carven from the laurel-tree,
Fruit of the Hesperides
Burnish take on Eden-trees,
The Muses' sacred grove be wet
With the red dew of Olivet,
And Sappho lay her burning brows
In white Cecilia's lap of snows!

Thy childhood must have felt the stings
Of too divine o'ershadowings;
Its odorous heart have been a blossom
That in darkness did unbosom
Those fire-flies of God to invite,
Burning spirits, which by night
Bear upon their laden wing
To such hearts impregnating.
For flowers that night-wings fertilize
Mock down the stars' unsteady eyes,

And with a happy, sleepless glance
Gaze the moon out of countenance.
I think thy girlhood's watchers must
Have took thy folded songs on trust,
And felt them, as one feels the stir
Of still lightnings in the hair,
When conscious hush expects the cloud
To speak the golden secret loud
Which tacit air is privy to;
Flasked in the grape the wine they knew,
Ere thy poet-mouth was able
For its first young starry babble.
Keep'st thou not yet that subtle grace?
Yea, in this silent interspace,
God sets His poems in thy face!

The loom which mortal verse affords,
Out of weak and mortal words,
Wovest thou thy singing-weed in,
To a rune of thy far Eden.
Vain are all disguises! Ah,
Heavenly *incognita*!
Thy mien bewrayeth through that wrong
The great Uranian House of Song!
As the vintages of earth
Taste of the sun that riped their birth,
We know that never-cadent Sun
Thy lampèd clusters throbbèd upon,
What plumèd feet the winepress trod;
Thy wine is flavorful of God.
Whatever singing-robe thou wear
Has the Paradisal air;
And some gold feather it has kept
Shows what Floor it lately swept!

Grace of the Way

MY brother!" spake she to the sun;
The kindred kisses of the stars
Were hers; her feet were set upon
The moon. If slumber solved the bars

Of sense, or sense transpicuous grown
Fulfillèd seeing unto sight,
I know not; nor if 'twas my own
Ingathered self that made her night.

The windy trammel of her dress,
Her blown locks, took my soul in mesh;
God's breath they spake, with visibleness
That stirred the raiment of her flesh:

And sensible, as her blown locks were,
Beyond the precincts of her form
I felt the woman flow from her—
A calm of intempestuous storm.

I failed against the affluent tide;
Out of this abject earth of me
I was translated and enskied
Into the heavenly-regioned She.

Now of that vision I bereaven
This knowledge keep, that may not dim:—
Short arm needs man to reach to Heaven,
So ready is Heaven to stoop to him;

Which sets, to measure of man's feet,
No alien Tree for trysting-place;
And who can read, may read the sweet
Direction in his Lady's face.

And pass and pass the daily crowd,
Unwares, occulted Paradise;
Love the lost plot cries silver-loud,
Nor any know the tongue he cries.

The light is in the darkness, and
The darkness doth not comprehend :
God hath no haste; and God's sons stand
Yet a day, tarrying for the end.

Dishonoured Rahab still hath hid,
Yea still, within her house of shame,
The messengers by Jesus bid
Forerun the coming of His Name.

The Word was flesh, and crucified,
From the beginning, and blasphemed :
Its profaned raiment men divide,
Damned by what, revered, had redeemed.

Thy Lady, was thy heart not blind,
One hour gave to thy witless trust
The key thou go'st about to find;
And thou hast dropped it in the dust.

Of her, the Way's one mortal grace,
Own, save thy seeing be all forgot,
That, truly, God was in this place,
And thou, unblest, knew'st it not.

But some have eyes, and will not see;
And some would see, and have not eyes;
And fail the tryst, yet find the Tree,
And take the lesson for the prize.

The After Woman

DAUGHTER of the ancient Eve,
We know the gifts ye gave—and give
Who knows the gifts which you shall give,
Daughter of the newer Eve?

You, if my soul be augur, you
Shall—O what shall you not, Sweet, do?
The celestial traitress play,
And all mankind to bliss betray;
With sacrosanct cajoleries
And starry treachery of your eyes
Tempt us back to Paradise!
Make heavenly trespass;—ay, press in
Where faint the fledge-foot seraphim,
Blest fool! Be ensign of our wars,
And shame us all to warriors!
Unbanner your bright locks,—advance,
Girl, their gilded puissance,
I' the mystic vaward, and draw on
After the lovely gonfalon
Us to outfolly the excess
Of your sweet foolhardiness;
To adventure like intense
Assault against Omnipotence!

Give me song, as She is, new,
Earth should turn in time thereto!
New, and new, and thrice so new,
All old sweets, New Sweet, meant you!
Fair, I had a dream of thee,
When my young heart beat prophecy,
And in apparition elate
Thy little breasts knew waxèd great,
Sister of the Canticle,
And thee for God grown marriageable.
How my desire desired your day,
That, wheeled in rumour on its way,
Shook me thus with presentience! Then
Eden's lopped tree shall shoot again:
For who Christ's eyes shall miss, with those
Eyes for evident nuncios?
Or who be tardy to His call

In your accents augural?
 Who shall not feel the Heavens hid
 Impend, at tremble of your lid,
 And divine advent shine avowed
 Under that dim and lucid cloud;
 Yea, 'fore the silver apocalypse,
 Fail, at the unsealing of your lips?
 When to love *you* is (O Christ's Spouse!)
 To love the beauty of His house.
 Then come the Isaian days; the old
 Shall dream; and our young men behold
 Vision—yea, the vision of Thabor mount,
 Which none to other shall recount,
 Because in all men's hearts shall be
 The seeing and the prophecy.
 For ended is the Mystery Play,
 When Christ is life, and you the way;
 When Egypt's spoils are Israel's right,
 And Day fulfils the married arms of Night.
 But here my lips are still.
 Until
 You and the hour shall be revealed,
 This song is sung and sung not, and its words are sealed.

Ode to the Setting Sun

Prelude

THE wailful sweetness of the violin
 Floats down the hushed waters of the wind,
 The heart-strings of the throbbing harp begin
 To long in aching music. Spirit-pined,
 In wafts that poignant sweetness drifts, until
 The wounded soul ooze sadness. The red sun,
 A bubble of fire, drops slowly toward the hill,
 While one bird prattles that the day is done.

O setting Sun, that as in reverent days
 Sinkest in music to thy smoothèd sleep,
Discrowned of homage, though yet crowned with rays,
 Hymned not at harvest more, though reapers reap :

For thee this music wakes not. O deceived,
 If thou hear in these thoughtless harmonies
A pious phantom of adorings reaved,
 And echo of fair ancient flatteries !

Yet, in this field where the Cross planted reigns,
 I know not what strange passion bows my head
To thee, whose great command upon my veins
 Proves thee a god for me not dead, not dead !

For worship it is too incredulous,
 For doubt—oh, too believing passionate !
What wild divinity makes my heart thus
 A fount of most baptismal tears?—Thy straight

Long beam lies steady on the Cross. Ah me !
 What secret would thy radiant finger show?
Of thy bright mastership is this the key?
 Is *this* thy secret, then? And is it woe?

Fling from thine ear the burning curls, and hark
 A song thou hast not heard in Northern day;
For Rome too daring, and for Greece too dark,
 Sweet with wild wings that pass, that pass away !

Ode

Alpha and Omega, sadness and mirth,
The springing music, and its wasting breath—
The fairest things in life are Death and Birth,
 And of these two the fairer thing is Death.
Mystical twins of Time inseparable,
The younger hath the holier array,
 And hath the awfuller sway :

It is the falling star that trails the light,
It is the breaking wave that hath the might,
The passing shower that rainbows maniple.
Is it not so, O thou down-stricken Day,
That draw'st thy splendours round thee in thy fall?
High was thine Eastern pomp inaugural;
But thou dost set in statelier pageantry,
Lauded with tumults of a firmament:
Thy visible music-blasts make deaf the sky,
Thy cymbals clang to fire the Occident,
Thou dost thy dying so triumphally:
I see the crimson blaring of thy shawms!

Why do those lucent palms
Strew thy feet's failing thicklier than their might,
Who dost but hood thy glorious eyes with night,
And vex the heels of all the yesterdays?

Lo! this loud, lackeying praise
Will stay behind to greet the usurping moon,
When they have cloud-barred over thee the West.
O shake the bright dust from thy parting shoon!
The earth not pæans thee, nor serves thy hest;
Be godded not by Heaven! avert thy face,
And leave to blank disgrace
The oblivious world! unsceptre thee of state and place!

Ha! but bethink thee what thou gazedst on,
Ere yet the snake Decay had venomed tooth;
The name thou bar'st in those vast seasons gone—
Candid Hyperion,
Clad in the light of thine immortal youth!
Ere Dionysus bled thy vines,
Or Artemis drave her clamours through the wood,
Thou saw'st how once against Olympus' height
The brawny Titans stood,
And shook the gods' world 'bout their ears, and how
Enceladus (whom Etna cumbers now)

Shouldered me Pelion with its swinging pines,
The river unrecked, that did its broken flood
Spurt on his back : before the mountainous shock
 The rankèd gods dislock,
Scared to their skies; wide o'er rout-trampled night
Flew spurned the pebbled stars : those splendours then
 Had tempestèd on earth, star upon star
 Mounded in ruin, if a longer war
Had quaked Olympus and cold-fearing men.
 Then did the ample marge
 And circuit of thy targe
 Sullenly redden all the vaward fight,
 Above the blustering clash
 Wheeled thy swung falchion's flash,
 And hewed their forces into splintered flight.

Yet ere Olympus thou wast, and a god !
 Though we deny thy nod,
 We cannot spoil thee of thy divinity.
 What know we elder than thee?
When thou didst, bursting from the great void's husk,
Leap like a lion on the throat o' the dusk;
 When the angels rose-chapleted
 Sang each to other,
 The vaulted blaze overhead
 Of their vast pinions spread,
 Hailing thee brother;
How chaos rolled back from the wonder,
And the First Morn knelt down to thy visage of thunder !
 Thou didst draw to thy side
 Thy young Auroral bride,
And lift her veil of night and mystery;
 Tellus with baby hands
 Shook off her swaddling-bands,
And from the unswathèd vapours laughed to thee.
Thou twi-form deity, nurse at once and sire !
 Thou genitor that all things nourishest !

The earth was suckled at thy shining breast,
And in her veins is quick thy milky fire.
Who scarfed her with the morning? and who set
Upon her brow the day-fall's carcanet?

Who queened her front with the enronoured moon?
Who dug night's jewels from their vaulty mine
To dower her, past an Eastern wizard's dreams,
When, hovering on him through his haschish-swoon,
All the rained gems of the old Tartarian line
Shiver in lustrous throbbings of tinged flame?
Whereof a moiety in the Paolis' seams
Statelily builded their Venetian name.
Thou hast enwoofèd her
An empress of the air,
And all her births are propertied by thee :
Her teeming centuries
Drew being from thine eyes :
Thou fatt'st the marrow of all quality.

Who lit the furnace of the mammoth's heart?
Who shagged him like Pilatus' ribbèd flanks?
Who raised the columned ranks
Of that old pre-diluvian forestry,
Which like a continent torn oppressed the sea,
When the ancient heavens did in rains départ,
While the high-dancèd whirls
Of the tossed scud made hiss thy drenchèd curls?
Thou rear'dst the enormous brood;
Who hast with life imbued
The lion maned in tawny majesty,
The tiger velvet-barred,
The stealthy-stepping pard,
And the lithe panther's flexuous symmetry.

How came the entombèd tree a light-bearer,
Though sunk in lightless lair?

Friend of the forgers of earth,
Mate of the earthquake and thunders volcanic,
Clasped in, the arms of the forces Titanic
Which rock like a cradle the girth
Of the ether-hung world;
Swart son of the swarthy mine,
When flame on the breath of his nostrils feeds
How is his countenance half-divine,
Like thee in thy sanguine weeds?
Thou gavest him his light,
Though sepultured in night
Beneath the dead bones of a perished world;
Over his prostrate form
Though cold, and heat, and storm,
The mountainous wrack of a creation hurled.

Who made the splendid rose
Saturate with purple glows;
Cupped to the marge with beauty; a perfume-press
Whence the wind vintages
Gushes of warmèd fragrance richer far
Than all the flavourous ooze of Cyprus' vats?
Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,
With dusky cheeks burnt red
She sways her heavy head,
Drunk with the must of her own odorousness;
While in a moted trouble the vexed gnats
Maze, and vibrate, and tease the noontide hush.
Who girt dissolvèd lightnings in the grape?
Summered the opal with an Irised flush?
Is it not thou that dost the tulip drape,
And huest the daffodilly,
Yet who hast snowed the lily,
And her frail sister, whom the waters name,
Dost vestal-vesture 'mid the blaze of June,
Cold as the new-sprung girlhood of the moon
Ere Autumn's kiss sultry her cheek with flame?

Thou sway'st thy sceptred beam
O'er all delight and dream,
Beauty is beautiful but in thy glance:
And like a jocund maid
In garland flowers arrayed,
Before thy ark Earth keeps her sacred dance.

And now, O shaken from thine antique throne,
And sunken from thy cœrule empery,
Now that the red glare of thy fall is blown
In smoke and flame about the windy sky,
Where are the wailing voices that should meet
From hill, stream, grove, and all of mortal shape
Who tread thy gifts, in vineyards as stray feet
Pulp the globed weight of juiced Iberia's grape?
Where is the threne o' the sea?
And why not dirges thee
The wind, that sings to himself as he makes stride
Lonely and terrible on the Andean height?
Where is the Naiad 'mid her sworded sedge?
The Nymph wan-glimmering by her wan fount's verge
The Dryad at timid gaze by the wood-side?
The Oread jutting light
On one up-strained sole from the rock-ledge?
The Nereid tip-toe on the scud o' the surge,
With whistling tresses dank athwart her face,
And all her figure poised in lithe Circean grace?
Why withers their lament?
Their tresses tear-besprent,
Have they sighed hence with trailing garment-hem?
O sweet, O sad, O fair,
I catch your flying hair,
Draw your eyes down to me, and dream on them!

A space, and they fleet from me. Must ye fade—
O old, essential candours, ye who made
The earth a living and a radiant thing—

And leave her corpse in our strained, cheated arms?
Lo ever thus, when Song with corded charms
Draws from dull death his lost Eurydice,
Lo ever thus, even at consummating,
Even in the swooning minute that claims her his,
Even as he trembles to the impassioned kiss
Of reincarnate Beauty, his control
Clasps the cold body, and forgoes the soul!
Whatso looks lovelily
Is but the rainbow on life's weeping rain.
Why have we longings of immortal pain,
And all we long for mortal? Woe is me,
And all our chants but chaplet some decay,
As mine this vanishing—nay, vanished Day.
The low sky-line dusks to a leaden hue,
No rift disturbs the heavy shade and chill,
Save one, where the charred firmament lets through
The scorching dazzle of Heaven; 'gainst which the hill
Out-flattened sombrely,
Stands black as life against eternity.
Against eternity?
A rifting light in me
Burns through the leaden broodings of the mind:
O blessed Sun, thy state
Uprisen or derogate
Dafts me no more with doubt, I seek and find.

If with exultant tread
Thou foot the Eastern sea,
Or like a golden bee
Sting the West to angry red,
Thou dost image, thou dost follow,
That King-Maker of Creation,
Who, ere Hellas hailed Apollo,
Gave thee, angel-god, thy station;
Thou art of Him a type memorial.

Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;
And His stained brow did veil like thine to-night,
Yet lift once more Its light,
And, risen, again departed from our ball,
But when It set on earth arose in Heaven.
Thus hath He unto death His beauty given:
And so of all which form inheriteth
The fall doth pass the rise in worth;
For birth hath in itself the germ of death,
But death hath in itself the germ of birth.
It is the falling acorn buds the tree,
The falling rain that bears the greenery,
The fern-plants moulder when the ferns arise.
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.
Till skies be fugitives,
Till Time, the hidden root of change, updries,
Are Birth and Death inseparable on earth;
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth.

After-Strain

Now with wan ray that other sun of Song
Sets in the bleakening waters of my soul:
One step, and lo! the Cross stands gaunt and long
'Twixt me and yet bright skies, a presaged dole.

Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory.
Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields;
Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,
Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.

Of reaped joys thou art the heavy sheaf
Which must be lifted, though the reaper groan;
Yea, we may cry till Heaven's great ear be deaf,
But we must bear thee, and must bear alone.

Vain were a Simon; of the Antipodes
Our night not borrows the superfluous day.
Yet woe to him that from his burden flees,
Crushed in the fall of what he cast away.

Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape
The Cross's rigorous austerity,
Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must gape.

"Lo, though suns rise and set, but crosses stay,
I leave thee ever," saith she, "light of cheer."
'Tis so: yon sky still thinks upon the Day,
And showers aerial blossoms on his bier.

Yon cloud with wrinkled fire is edgèd sharp;
And once more welling through the air, ah me!
How the sweet viol plains him to the harp,
Whose pangèd sobbings throng tumultuously.

Oh, this Medusa-pleasure with her stings!
This essence of all suffering, which is joy!
I am not thankless for the spell it brings,
Though tears must be told down for the charmed toy

No; while soul, sky, and music bleed together,
Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
Prove them the brood of immortality.

My soul is quitted of death-neighbouring swoon,
Who shall not slake her immitigable scars
Until she hear "My sister!" from the moon,
And take the kindred kisses of the stars.

Any Saint

HIS shoulder did I hold
Too high that I, o'erbold
Weak one,
Should lean thereon.

But He a little hath
Declined His stately path
And my
Feet set more high;

That the slack arm may reach
His shoulder, and faint speech
Stir
His unwithering hair.

And bolder now and bolder
I lean upon that shoulder,
So dear
He is and near :

And with His aureole
The tresses of my soul
Are blent
In wished content.

Yea, this too gentle Lover
Hath flattering words to move her
To pride
By His sweet side.

Ah, Love! somewhat let be!—
Lest my humility
Grow weak
When Thou dost speak.

Rebate Thy tender suit,
Lest to herself impute
Some worth
Thy bride of earth!

A maid too easily
Conceits herself to be
 Those things
Her lover sings;

And being straitly wooed,
Believes herself the Good
 And Fair
He seeks in her.

Turn something of Thy look,
And fear me with rebuke,
 That I
May timorously

Take tremors in Thy arms,
And with contrived charms
 Allure
A love ensure.

Not to me, not to me,
Builded so flawfully,
 O God,
Thy humbling laud!

Lo, God's two worlds immense,
Of spirit and of sense,
 Wed
In this narrow bed;

Yea, and the midge's hymn
Answers the seraphim
 Athwart
Thy body's court!

Great arm-fellow of God!
To the ancestral clod
 Kin,
And to cherubin.

Thou meaning, couldst thou see,
Of all which dafteth thee;
 So plain,
It mocks thy pain.

Stone of the Law indeed,
Thine own self couldst thou read;
 Thy bliss
Within thee is.

Compost of Heaven and mire,
Slow foot and swift desire!
 Lo,
To have Yes, choose No;

Gird, and thou shalt unbind;
Seek not, and thou shalt find;
 To eat,
Deny thy meat.

Stoop, stoop; for thou dost fear
The nettle's wrathful spear,
 So slight
Art thou of might!

Rise! for Heaven hath no frown
When thou to thee pluck'st down,
 Strong clod!
The neck of God.

Contemplation

THIS morning saw I, fled the shower,
The earth reclining in a lull of power;
The heavens, pursuing not their path,
Lay stretched out naked after bath,

Or so it seemed; field, water, tree, were still,
Nor was there any purpose on the calm-browed hill.
The hill, which sometimes visibly is
Wrought with unresting energies,
Looked idly; from the musing wood,
And every rock, a life renewed
Exhaled like an unconscious thought
When poets, dreaming unperplexed,
Dream that they dream of naught.
Nature one hour appears a thing unsexed,
Or to such serene balance brought
That her twin natures cease their sweet alarms,
And sleep in one another's arms.
The sun with resting pulses seems to brood,
And slacken its command upon my unurged blood.

The river has not any care
Its passionless water to the sea to bear;
The leaves have brown content;
The wall to me has freshness like a scent,
And takes half animate the air,
Making one life with its green moss and stain;
And life with all things seems too perfect blent
For anything of life to be aware.
The very shades on hill, and tree, and plain,
Where they have fallen doze, and where they doze remain.

No hill can idler be than I;
No stone its inter-particled vibration
Investeth with a stiller lie;
No heaven with a more urgent rest betrays
The eyes that on it gaze.
We are too near akin that thou shouldst cheat
Me, Nature, with thy fair deceit.
In poets floating like a water-flower
Upon the bosom of the glassy hour,
In skies that no man sees to move,

Lurk untumultuous vortices of power,
For joy too native, and for agitation
Too instant, too entire for sense thereof,
Motion like gnats when autumn suns are low,
Perpetual as the prisoned feet of love
On the heart's floors with pained pace that go.
From stones and poets you may know,
Nothing so active is, as that which least seems so.

For he, that conduit running wine of song,
Then to himself does most belong
When he his mortal house unbars
To the importunate and thronging feet
That round our corporal walls unheeded beat;
Till, all containing, he exalt
His stature to the stars, or stars
Narrow their heaven to his fleshly vault:
When, like a city under ocean,
To human things he grows a desolation,
And is made a habitation
For the fluctuous universe
To lave with unimpeded motion.
He scarcely frets the atmosphere
With breathing, and his body shares
The immobility of rocks;
His heart's a drop-well of tranquillity;
His mind more still is than the limbs of fear,
And yet its unperturbed velocity
The spirit of the simoon mocks.
He round the solemn centre of his soul
Wheels like a dervish, while his being is
Streamed with the set of the world's harmonies,
In the long draft of whatsoever sphere
He lists the sweet and clear
Clangour of his high orbit on to roll,
So gracious is his heavenly grace;
And the bold stars does hear,

Every one in his airy soar,
For evermore
Shout to each other from the peaks of space,
As' thwart' ravines of azure shouts the mountaineer.

A Fallen Yew

IT seemed corival of the world's great prime,
Made to unedge the scythe of Time,
And last with stateliest rhyme.

No tender Dryad ever did indue
That rigid chiton of rough yew,
To fret her white flesh through;

But some god, like to those grim Asgard lords
Who walk the fables of the hordes
From Scandinavian fjords,

Upheaved its stubborn girth, and raised unriven,
Against the world-blast and the levin,
Defiant arms to Heaven.

When doom puffed out the stars, we might have said,
It would decline its heavy head,
And see the world to bed.

For this firm yew did from the vassal leas,
And rain and air, its tributaries,
Its revenues increase,

And levy impost on the golden sun,
Take the blind years as they might run,
And no fate seek or shun.

But now our yew is strook, is fallen—yea,
Hacked like dull wood of every day
To this and that, men say.

Never!—To Hades' shadowy shipyards gone,
Dim barge of Dis, down Acheron
It drops, or Lethe wan.

Stirred by its fall—poor destined bark of Dis!—
Along my soul a bruit there is
Of echoing images,

Reverberations of mortality :
Spelt backward from its death, to me
Its life reads saddenedly.

Its breast was hollowed as the tooth of eld;
And boys, their creeping unbeheld,
A laughing moment dwelled.

Yet they, within its very heart so crept,
Reached not the heart that courage kept
With winds and years beswept.

And in its boughs did close and kindly nest
The birds, as they within its breast,
By all its leaves caressed.

But bird nor child might touch by any art
Each other's or the tree's hid heart;
A whole God's breadth apart;

The breadth of God, the breadth of death and life!
Even so, even so, in undreamed strife
With pulseless Law, the wife,—

The sweetest wife on sweetest marriage-day,—
Their souls at grapple in mid-way,
Sweet to her sweet may say :

“I take you to my inmost heart, my true!”
Ah, fool! but there is one heart you
Shall never take him to!

The hold that falls not when the town is got,
The heart's heart, whose immured plot
Hath keys yourself keep not!

Its ports you cannot burst—you are withstood—
For him that to your listening blood
Sends precepts as he would.

Its gates are deaf to Love, high summoner;
Yea, Love's great warrant runs not there:
You are your prisoner.

Yourself are with yourself the sole consortress
In that unleaguerable fortress;
It knows you not for portress.

Its keys are at the cincture hung of God;
Its gates are trepidant to His nod;
By Him its floors are trod.

And if His feet shall rock those floors in wrath,
Or blest aspersion sleek His path,
Is only choice it hath.

Yea, in that ultimate heart's occult abode
To lie as in an oubliette of God,
Or in a bower untrod,

Built by a secret Lover for His Spouse;—
Sole choice is this your life allows,
Sad tree, whose perishing boughs
So few birds house!

To Stars

YOU, my unrest, and Night's tranquillity,
Bringers of peace to it, and pang to me:
You that on heaven and on my heart cast fire,
To heaven a purging light, my heart unpurged desire;

Bright juts for foothold to the climbing sight
Which else must slip from the steep infinite;
Reared standards which the sequent centuries
Snatch, each from his forerunner's grasp who dies,
To lead our forlorn hope upon the skies;
Bells that from night's great bell-tower hang in gold,
Whereon God rings His changes manifold;
Meek guides and daughters to the blinded heaven
In Ædipean, remitless wandering driven;
The burning rhetoric, quenchless oratory,
Of the magniloquent and all-suasive sky;
I see and feel you—but to feel and see
How two child-eyes have dulled a firmament for me.

Once did I bring her, hurt upon her bed,
Flowers we had loved together; brought, and said:—
“I plucked them; yester-morn you liked them wild.”
And then she laid them on my eyes, and smiled.
And now, poor Stars, your fairness is not fair,
Because I cannot gather it for her;
I cannot sheave you in my arms, and say:—
“See, sweet, you liked these yester-eve; like them for *me*
to-day!”

She has no care, my Stars, of you or me;
She has no care, we tire her speedily;
She has no care, because she cannot see—
She cannot see, who sees not past her sight.
We are set too high, we tire her with our height:
Her years are small, and ill to strain above.
She may not love us: wherefore keep we love
To her who may not love us—you and I?
And yet you thrill down towards her, even as I,
With all your golden eloquence held in mute.
We may not plead, we may not plead our suit;
Our wingèd love must beat against its bars:
For should she enter once within those guarding bars,
Our love would do her hurt—oh, think of that, my Stars!

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